

REFORMATTING RECORDS

The Georgia Records Act requires each state agency to "establish and maintain an active program for the economical and efficient management of records..." [*Official Code of Georgia, Annotated* (O.C.G.A.) 50-18-94]. Each local government is required to "approve by resolution or ordinance a records management plan..." [O.C.G.A. 50-18-99].

Records come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and types, such as hand-copied ledger books, newspaper files, and various forms created over time to record information for licenses, court orders, and permits. Unstable or heavily used records may require transfer to another format, such as microfilm or permanent paper, to ensure preservation of the information they contain.

MICROFILM



Records are microfilmed to preserve their information, reduce wear and tear on originals, save space, and improve access. Copies of film can be distributed to off-site locations, providing access to more than one user at a time. The Microfilm Disposal Schedule and some records retention schedules allow for the early disposal of records

once microfilmed. If properly processed and stored, black and white, silver gelatin microfilm has a usable life of about 500 years, far longer than the useful life of many poor-quality original paper records. Camera masters of the film currently may be stored at the Georgia Department of Archives and History, ensuring the existence of a "security copy." Even if original paper records were damaged, stolen, or destroyed, the *information* from those records would still survive if the originals had been filmed.

Selection

Microfilm all vital records. O.C.G.A. 50-18-91 defines vital records as "any record vital to the resumption or continuation of operations, or both; to the recreation of the legal and financial status of government in the state; or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to citizens of the state." Vital records are among the permanent records for which an agency is responsible.

Typical vital records include board minutes and tax, birth, marriage, deed, and death records. Also regard inventories and finding aids as vital records. Many record schedules indicate which records are vital.

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Contracts

A written contract will outline specific requirements and describe the record series to be filmed. Include cubic feet or number of items, if known. Specify in this contract that all work must be done according to the *Micrographics Standards* established by the Georgia State Records Committee and the Administrative Office of the Courts. Copies of these standards are available from the Georgia Department of Archives and History.

Research several companies and determine whether other agencies were pleased with the quality of their work. Solicit bids for the project from at least three companies.

Standards

Micrographics standards define exactly what should happen in the microfilming process, to ensure that the end product is of the highest quality possible. Standards prescribe appropriate targets, density and resolution, film quality, processing, and quality control. The standards also prescribe the creation of a camera negative (security copy), a printing negative (reproduction copy), and use copies. All microfilm, whether produced by a microfilm service company or produced in-house, must meet the *Micrographics Standards*.

DIGITAL SCANNING

While scanning records for electronic use allows access by multiple users and saves space, digital scanning requires an expensive commitment to supporting technologies used to convert and retrieve records. Moreover, digital technology is not yet standardized, and new developments are continually occurring.

Microfilm is a stable technology and a proven method for preserving records. Microfilm records first. At a later date, the microfilm copy can be scanned for ready access as needed.

PHOTOCOPYING

Photocopying is another way to preserve the informational content of records. Records on poor-quality papers and those generated by thermofax copying processes or pressure-transfer forms are unstable.



Transfer information from these records to alkaline papers that meet the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard for permanent paper, Z39.48-1992. Such papers are readily available from paper distributors upon request. Copying onto stable alkaline paper will help to ensure the long-term preservation of the information contained in a record.

Make all preservation photocopies using a black and white copy machine. Color photocopies may not be stable over the long term.

Surrogates

As a records custodian, you are protecting the rights of both present and future users to have access to records. Continued use of originals can prevent future access to information if records become damaged through excessive wear. Use photocopyers to create a "use copy," or surrogate. Write policies to limit access to originals when surrogates are available, and explain to users why you are taking this extra care.

When making surrogates, never send original records through a document feeder on a photocopier. If it is necessary to "feed" oversized records through a copying machine designed exclusively for this purpose, place original documents in protective polyester sleeves prior to duplication.

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Reformatting is an effective way to ensure the long-term preservation of information. For more information, call 404-656-3554 to contact the Georgia Department of Archives and History, a division of the Office of Secretary of State.

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RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American National Standards Institute (ANSI)
11 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036.
Telephone: 212-642-4900.

- *Local Government Handbook: Using the Common Records Retention Schedules*
- *Managing Public Records, Common Retention Schedules for County Governments*
- *Managing Public Records, Common Retention Schedules for Municipal Governments*
- *Managing Public Records, Common Retention Schedules for School Systems*

Office of Secretary of State
Department of Archives and History
330 Capitol Avenue, S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30334.
Telephone: 404-656-2379.

Managing Public Records: Micrographics Standards

Office of Secretary of State
Department of Archives and History
330 Capitol Avenue, S.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334.
Telephone: 404-656-2379

The Georgia Newspaper Project Photographic Services

University of Georgia Library, Main
Athens, Georgia 30602.
Telephone: 404-542-2131.

Eklington, Nancy E., editor.

RLG Archives Microfilming Manual.

Mountainview, California: Research Libraries
Group, Inc., 1994.

Telephone: 415-691-2200. ■

This paper meets the ANSI Z39.48-1992 standard for permanent paper. ∞

Georgia Department of Archives and History
Secretary of State
330 Capitol Avenue, S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30334